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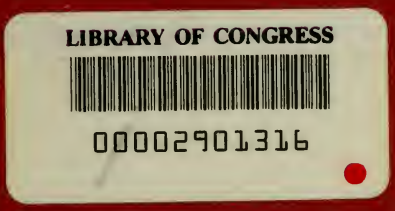

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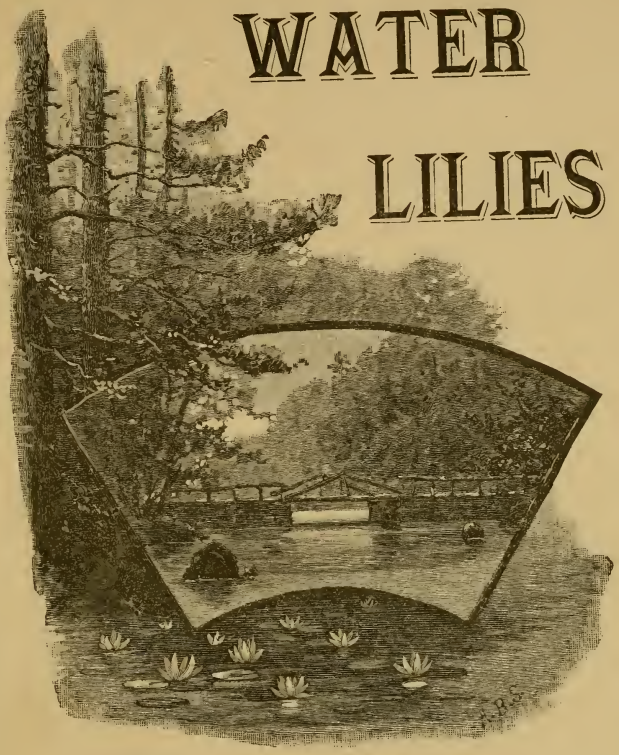
WATER LILIES



AND OTHER POEMS.

BY CLARA B. HEATH.

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To the Friends

WHO HAVE SO GENEROUSLY AIDED ME

IN BRINGING THIS VOLUME BEFORE THE PUBLIC,

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THE AUTHORESS.

I sought a talisman, as years went by
With all their freight of sorrow and of bliss,
To cheer me when life's springs were few or dry,
To help me when the loved and lost I miss, —
A charm that bringing smiles, or but a sigh,
Might soothe and strengthen like a mother's kiss.
I found it, not amid the busy throng,
But on the border of the land of song.

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WATER LILIES.

O regal roses so bright and fair!
Filling with fragrance the balmy air,
Glowing in beauty on every hand,
Sweeter than dreams of a fairy land;
'T is well to come when the year is new,
In its freshest green, and its brightest blue.

In early spring 't was the violet
We searched for in woods and meadows wet,
Arbutus, too, with its pink and white,
Was ever a source of new delight;
While the purple pansies the gardens brought,
Were sweeter than all, we sometimes thought.

But the heart of the summer brings a glow
No other time in the year can know.
We seek the lake, and the little boat,
And over the waters dreaming float,
To gather the lilies, starry-eyed,
That rest on the shining, lapsing tide.

What is as fair of all flowers that bloom?
What is as rare, with its rare perfume?
What is as pure, with its home of waves?
What is as fresh that the sunbeam laves?
Perfect in grace, and in loveliness!
What is as dainty and sweet as this?

How spotless the pearly leaves that fold
O'er the hidden and perfumed heart of gold!
Like fairy castles they seem to float,
From the shocks and sins of life remote;

Anchored, though wind and wave go by,
With an upward look at the azure sky.

The brightest morn that my childhood knew,
Was one on the waves so dark and blue.
How rich I was, and how gay and glad,
Though the gold of the lilies was all I had!
We've gathered little by life's highway
As pure as the treasures of that fair day.

Sweet water lilies, of white and gold,
That spring from a bed so dark and cold;
With never a taint of their lowly birth,
And never a touch of their mother earth;
The heart of the summer would still have shone
Though never another flower had blown.

DEER-NECK BRIDGE.

I.—IN A DREAM.

The wooded shore rose up from waters dark;
The hill was steep and strange with storm-washed rocks;
One giant pine stood crownless, cold and stark,
Save for the small white birds that came in flocks,
Noiseless as phantoms from some spectral park,
To clothe the naked limbs; no stir, no shock,
No whirr of restless wings,—each knew its place
And nestled there with an unconscious grace.

The bridge was high and inaccessible,
As if by some almighty hand updrawn

From out the wash of waves that rose and fell
Beneath in measured cadence. In the dawn
A boat lay near it, rocked with gentle swell,—
No oars, nor sails; all save the pennant gone!
We thought the boat had been our home for aye,—
A prison home,—and wished it far away.

Above the barren rocks, so safe and high,
We sat upon a bed of downy moss
Starred o'er with dewy flowers; the wind went by,
And waves of perfume came and went across.
If all the bustling world had drifted nigh,
With all its hoarded gain, it had been loss
To that sweet consciousness of peace and bliss.
The question came, Will heaven be like this?

II.—IN A PICTURE.

A summer scene! The shine and shadows lay
Portrayed so faithfully by artist hand;

A flood of light seems quivering o'er the bay;
A neighboring forest rises tall and grand,
Suggestive of cool paths that wind away
To shady nooks; a thread-like beach of sand;
And, in the foreground which the bright waves deck,
The rustic bridge across the narrow "Neck."

We seem to hear the ripple of the tide,
We half expect to see it rise and fall;
How warm the sunbeams flashing free and wide!
We fancy that we hear the wild bird's call
Across the dusky wood, from side to side.
The old familiar sounds — the stillness — all
Its quiet beauty steal upon the heart;
Here matchless Nature lends her grace to art.

III. — IN WINTER.

Once more — the spotless snow lies soft and white
On rock and tree; it crowns the sloping hill;

The lake's bright face is hidden from our sight
By frosty armor, as if some great will,
Some Titan power, had swept along in might,
Bidding the throbbing waves lie mute and still,
Save one dark quivering spot, the bridge below,
Where, evermore, the waters ebb and flow.

Gone are the lilies, with their hearts of gold,
Whose wondrous fragrance filled the summer air;
Gone all the leafy greenness, fold on fold,
That wrapped the stately trees with tender care.
A breeze comes down as if from glaciers cold;
The wind-swept bridge is desolate and bare;
Fancy invests the scene with glories gone;
We stand a moment, shivering, then pass on.

AT SEA.

Like some fair face that holds us captive in
A swaying crowd, where many a one is fair;
A face to something we have dreamed akin,
That charms the wandering thought and keeps it there;
So that fair day upon the sea has been; —
We were too happy for a thought of care.
One day like that, so full of peace and bliss,
Is worth a score of idle ones like this.

Do you remember, when the sun went down,
The golden ripples on the placid sea?
While in the far, dim distance lay the town,
That never looked to us so peacefully

While we did tread its mazy streets,—its crown
Of sunny splendor dazzling fair to me.
We watched it till it seemed to sink in sleep,
And leave us there upon the unknown deep.

Do you remember how the light grew pale
Along the distant shore, that seemed to melt
All imperceptibly? the snowy sail,
That like some fair white bird the breezes felt,
Out far beyond us? how our words did fail,
As they have often when in prayer we knelt?
Strange fancies thronged us in a wondrous way—
We never were more happy, or less gay.

The track our vessel made was broad and clear;
We watched the headlands as they came in view,
The lights, that did from time to time appear,
Like o'er-grown stars—it was so strange and new;

Such unfamiliar sounds fell on the ear —
The rush of waters as we glided through.
Mid such a broad expanse of sky and sea,
We felt like atoms in immensity.

And yet these atoms were a wondrous part
Of God's more wondrous whole, — we felt it then,
Down to the deep recesses of the heart;
Our truest thoughts came back to us again,
Our holiest purposes; we longed to start
Afresh in life. The sneers and frowns of men
Seemed less to us than the white foam that fell
And rose again with every passing swell.

What does it matter, when the storm is by,
A little more or less of wind and rain?
Or, when the sun is warm, and noon is high,
That morning fogs hung heavy o'er the plain?

What will it matter, when the end is nigh,
A little more or less of care and pain?
If we should leave some little things undone,
What will it matter, if a heaven is won?

A DAY DREAM.

I see a young and slender maid
Amid the garden's sweetness,
Where trailing vines their blossoms braid
With buds in green completeness;
A song that makes the wild birds start
Her dimpled mouth uncloses;
'Tis June within the maiden's heart,
And June among her roses.

All through the day that girlish form
Has seemed to stand before me;
I feel the summer sunbeams warm,
The breath of flowers is o'er me.

Above, a cloud of fleecy white,
Wind bound, in grace reposes,

But fairer, clearer to my sight,
The maiden and her roses.

O fancy, with thy fairy wand,
How could we live without thee!
Thou bringest gifts with lavish hand,
And strewest them about me.
When skies are dark, and winds are chill,
And pleasure sleeps or dozes,
Thy flowery realm is open still
With all its buds and roses.

That maiden fair no more I know, —
What matches time for fleetness?
Her bloom and song died long ago
Of their own magic sweetness.
A wintry blast sweeps rudely by,
The garden gate it closes,
I wake to find a stormy sky,
And snow instead of roses.

IT IS STRANGE.

Strange how very slight a token
Tells us of a promise broken,
When distrust is nigh.
Strange how all life's currents deepen,
And its joys and pleasures cheapen,
As the years go by.

Strange how thick a veil will cover
All the faults of friend or lover,
When they hold the heart.
Strange how slight a breath will lift it,
And how light a breeze will rift it,
When they fall apart.

Strange how schools of scandal gather
In the roughest of all weather —
Truths are far between.
Strange how many flowers of beauty
Blossom in the paths of duty,
That are never seen.

Strange how youthful passions linger,
While old Time with warning finger
Turns our locks to snow.
Strange how often hopes will brighten,
And how tempers flash and lighten,
Conquered long ago.

Strange how small a thread can tangle
All the web of life, and strangle
Good and wise intent.
Strange how love can lighten losses,
And how few of all our crosses
Are from Heaven sent.

TWO DAYS.

A morn in June, a warm south wind,
O'erhanging skies of heavenly hue;
Two children walking side by side,
To whom the world was fair and wide;
A sunny, sparkling brook behind,
Before, a field of lupines blue.

September's sun, and sky flecked o'er
With spotless clouds that lie in flocks;
A placid lake whose sapphire floor
Margined with glist'ning sand and rocks,
Seemed all inlaid with cloud and sky;
A cold, white form, a pall and bier,
A group of mourners standing by;
A pale, sad woman weeping near.

LIGHT AHEAD.

The night was dark, and the cold winds moaned
And tossed the waves on the shelly beach,
And the stars died out in the misty cloud
That gathered as far as the eye could reach.

The spirits of earth and air abroad
Told gloomy tales of the treacherous sea,
And sang low dirges, that rose and fell
With the winds and waves in harmony.

While a ship, with its cloud of canvas spread,
That had swept old ocean's broadest track,
And sunned itself in tropical climes
Under Orient skies, came wandering back,

Full freighted with hopes that had grown apace
As the day died out in the arms of night;
For to-morrow's sun could not fail to bring
The land they had loved so well in sight.

Yet the pilot peered through the gloom and mist,
And fancied he heard the breakers roar,
And the angry waves at the vessel's side
Suggested a reef or rock-bound shore.

But the lookout cried, "There is light ahead!"
And a cheer rose up from the hardy crew,
While the pilot murmured a prayer of thanks
As the well-known beacon came in view.

We are out on the ocean of life, and mists
Of doubt rise up from its restless waves;
And most of the hopes which our childhood knew
Have lain for years in forgotten graves.

And Memory, singing their dirges low,
  May well grow pale ere the task is done,
And long for a sip of a Lethean wave;
  But the touch is death, and she struggles on.

Thrice blessed are they who, when breakers roar,
  And the mists are thick, and the starlight dead,
Look hopefully over the waves of time —
  Those restless waves — to the *light ahead.*

A JUNE SONNET.

A poet were no poet if the June went by,
  Year after year, and brought no tender thrill
Through all his being till his pulse ran high.
  When thistle down before the wind lies still,
  His gross and selfish thoughts perchance will fill
The rare June days, with summer roses nigh.
A poet may be songless! his mute lips
  May answer not when Nature speaks in tune,
But rythmic numbers thro' each day-dream slips;
  His fancies throng him 'neath the pure pale moon;
He soars on wings the care fiend never clips,
  Tireless at eve as in the golden noon;
Prosaic reason 'neath his vision dips;—
  His purple mantle wraps him close in June.

SLEEPING AND WAKING.

Sleeping, my car is the fleecy cloud,
Its gold, and crimson, and azure bands
Clasp me about like a stainless shroud
Woven and folded by angel hands.
Waking, footsore in the valley I tread,
Hollow the echoes my footsteps raise;
Ghosts of the hopes that were long since dead
Lure me along in forbidden ways.

Sleeping, I stand on a dizzy height,
Sure of my footing, in purpose strong,
Brave as the eagle that bathes in light,
Proud as the lark of her morning song.
Waking, the mountains loom up through the mist,
Sunless, and barren, and hard to climb;

Bleak is the air as the north wind's kiss,
Pitiless, too, as the hand of time.

Sleeping, the dear ones I've loved and lost
Come round about me, their baby hands
Nestled in mine, and their kisses soft
Falling like dew in a thirsty land.
Waking, my arms are empty, and down
Deep in my heart is a fathomless pain;
I cover it up, but it does not drown;
I stifle its cries and go on again.

Sleeping, I sail over summer seas,
Softly the waves keep time to a tune;
Never were islands more fair than these,
Never such skies, though the time was June.
Waking, the islands are small and bare,
Strong is the current that sweeps me on;
Storms are abroad in the wintry air,
And the sails have been lowered, one by one.

Sleeping in death! while the mourners stand
Weeping at sight of the empty chair;
Perishing flowers in the folded hands,
Pale, and as cold as the snowflakes are.
Waking in life to an endless day,
Never darkened by sorrow or pain!
Never to faint in the golden way,
And never to sleep, dear Christ, again.

MY NEED.

More Faith, dear Father, send a large supply,
It wastes in pain and leaves the fountain dry;
'Tis what my weary heart has yearned for most,
I would possess it at whatever cost.

And Patience — when the day dies out in night
This blessed angel bids me wait the light
That comes in thine own time. It soothes my pain
To know who wait for Thee wait not in vain.

More Love — the shining key-stone to the soul!
Love binds the rest in one harmonious whole;
The archway crumbles if this stone decays,
And useless fragments choke the weary ways.

More Love I need, and thou alone canst give
Large, generous measure, — help me to receive!
Give what Thou canst, we know it would abound
If but a store-house in our hearts were found.

My need is great, — how great Thou knowest best.
I fain would walk in ways which Thou hast blest.
Clasp Thou my hand when winds and billows roar,
And hold me safely till I reach the shore.

PROGRESS.

They who walk upon the upland
  Must expect to feel the breeze;
All the warring winds of nature,
  Suns that melt, and snows that freeze.

But how great the compensation
  In the fairer, broader view;
In the clearer air surrounding,
  In the wide expanse of blue.

There is little worth the doing
  That is very easy done;
Wealth that comes without the wooing
  Is of little worth when won.

And the mind expands but slowly
In a hazy neighborhood,
Where the intellect is deadened
For the want of proper food.

Striking steel with wand of feathers
Never brings the glowing sparks;
And the spirit's growth and progress
Ever bears conflicting marks.

Gain is won by swift pursuing;
Many aim that never fire;
It is rising, living, doing,
That will bring the heart's desire.

SLEEPLESS.

Now let the hours pass onward as they choose;
Swift as a thought, or laggard in their flight;
A crowd of fancies, like a school let loose,
Will throng about us all this silent night.
Some will our hospitality abuse,
Leaving reluctantly at morning light;
While some will cheer us like a friendly face,
And others aid us in life's weary race.

We sleep and wake, and feel our strength return;
Sleep is the oil of life's machinery!
Our morning hopes do ever brightest burn,
At noon our burdens thickly round us lie;
And evening is no time in which to learn
The drift or end of ways long since passed by.

Sleep gathers up the strength dispersed by day,
And serves as staff and prop in every way.

And yet these wakeful nights are worth sometimes
Far more to us than those of dreamless sleep;
The joy-bells of the past ring out their chimes,
We catch faint glimpses of an unknown deep;
We fold the world's best music in our rhymes,
Our day-dreams find their level; and we creep
Out of the fairy realms of conscious youth,
And clasp the mantle of eternal truth.

It is a recompense to lie and catch
Such holy thoughts as waken better life;
To know that angels softly lift the latch,
And open our heart-cells, and loose the strife—
The evil passions that we kept to match
The ills encountered (for the way is rife

With ills and evils) — we, alas! are prone
To fling back dust for dust, and stone for stone.

And often in these sleepless, solemn nights,
Our better selves assert their strength and sway;
Our undimmed eyes see visions of fair heights
We had deemed inaccessible by day,
With paths defined in clear and rosy light,
From base to crown thro' all their winding way.
Life's lamp burns brighter — north winds have a charm;
We feel the strength of warriors in our arm!

IN MEMORIAM

HELEN S. FLETCHER.*

A Northern bud, a Southern rose,
She had the nameless grace of flowers;
Reared 'mid New England's frost and snow,
Matured where Southern breezes blow,
She was both theirs and ours.

A slender, almost girlish form,
A child-like, sweet simplicity;
Self-sacrificing, true and warm,
Unmoved by every passing storm, —
A courage rare to see.

* Principal of Morison Academy, Baltimore, Md.

A mind expansive, quick to hold
The pure and good wherever found;
Refined and purified like gold,
No corner of her heart was cold,
Her word no empty sound.

The minds she trained to usefulness
Will bless her memory year by year;
The ties of some grow less and less;
Hers seemed to multiply and bless,
So many held her dear.

She won you with a look, a word,
Her own inimitable grace;
You heard, and wondered as you heard,
As thought or feeling calmed or stirred
Her sweet expressive face.

Hers was no common life, or vain,
She set her standard high, and won;

Then, ere the light began to wane,
Fell on life's dusty battle plain,
Her work most nobly done.

Oh, sad May-day to her whose home
She shared that last most weary year!
She 'll miss through all her Mays to come
A sister's presence from each room,
And greet them with a tear.

O Summer! bring your grass and dew,
And clover starred with snowy flowers,
Bring violets, the white and blue,—
Do all the sweet things you can do,
To deck this grave of ours.

A QUERY.

Is it a Providence that makes or mars
  Our lives in such a blind and curious way?
Are we controlled by those fair, lustrous stars
  That shone upon our birth-night? When we stray
In restless mood beyond the outer bars
  Which Custom places, is it Destiny?
Something there must be leads us on and on,
E'en when we find our inclination gone,—

A will-o'-wisp that flits about the gloaming,
  And lures us here and there, full oft in pain;
And when we weary grow of so much roaming,
  Beguiles us to the starting point again;

Then, when we fancy our reward is coming,
Shuts out our prospect with a dismal rain
Of intermittent fears, that come and go
With every changing mood, and vex us so.

Is it a Providence that mars or makes
The lives we live? When we feel free as air,
Some generous impulse in the heart awakes —
We seek the pure — our lips are sweet with prayer;
Anon a word floats by, and lo! it takes
Unto itself whate'er is good or fair;
It leaves us swayed by doubts we did not choose,
Our wings are clipped, our liberty we lose.

Again, a little word in sportive jest
Brings a whole volume from an unsealed lip;
The smallest gift may be the one most blest,
And when we ask but for a finger tip

To cool the flame, a strong, whole hand is pressed
Into our service. When we think to slip
With heavy feet, Faith bids us boldly rise,
And Fortune stands revealed before our eyes.

God knows. The knowledge gathered grain by grain
Through years of patient toil,—such meager store!
To His all-seeing eye was always plain—
A group of pebbles on a boundless shore.
The whys and wherefores evermore have lain
Hidden by wisdom, and we know no more
Than all the countless throng the earth has seen
Since her fair hills and vales were robed in green.

HIS AND OURS.

She came, and all the world was full
Of sudden promise, as in spring,
When close upon some morning dull,
The birds come north on weary wing;
And all at once the sun looks out
Through misty curtains, parted wide;
The dreary fog is put to rout;
The swelling buds on every side
Grow round and sweet; and all the air
Is full of life and light so fair.

She came, and hopes that once we had,
And one by one dropped with a sigh, —

As mourning mothers, pale and sad,
Put little unworn garments by, —
Came back in robes of gold and rose,
With all their old bewitching grace,
And half life's cares, and all its woes,
Were lost when looking on her face.
We whispered, humbly, "God's to bless,
But ours to train for usefulness."

LAKE MASSABESIC.

If the Great Spirit's loving smile
In one fair lake* is shown,
What shall we say of this, meanwhile,
Like some sweet flower half blown.

No bluer waves with sunny glance
Reflect the light of day;
No brighter 'neath the moonbeams dance,
Or in the shadows play.

In every mood it has a charm,
Like some sweet, wayward child;
Fairest, perhaps, when bright and warm,
But fair when dark and wild.

* Lake Winnipesaukee.

Clouds thicken, and we feel a loss,
The shrouded sun goes down;
The swelling waters foam and toss
And give back frown for frown.

But morning with its light once more
The darkness doth efface;
Again the charms of sky and shore
Are mirrored in its face.

Expansive to our childish view,
It gave us hours of bliss;
We wondered how the ocean blue
Could be more broad than this!

And when we learned that pearls so bright
Lay in the ocean's bed,
We kissed the lilies, waxen white, —
"These are more fair," we said.

In that far-off Creation's day,
When earth and sea were planned,
I think this gem, with crystal ray,
Fell from our Father's hand.

THANKSGIVING.

We thank thee, Father, for the light
That came when all the way was rough,
And sorrow's clouds were dark enough
To hide thee all the day from sight.

Thy goodness stood revealed. Thy care,
Thy tender care for all the weak,
The weary ones too faint to speak,
Who seek thy presence everywhere.

We thank thee for the hand that held
Our own with such a tender clasp,
When life seemed slipping from our grasp,
And stormy fears would not be quelled.

We praise thee for the love that shone
With brighter glow in our great need,
For friends who proved themselves in deed
And truth to be our very own.

Good gifts and perfect, — and we know
Thou art the giver of all such;
We could not praise thee overmuch
If heart and tongue should overflow.

Let us not drift beyond the bound
Thy loving hand doth kindly place.
Storm-driven we have sought thy face,
And in thy love a harbor found.

And should our lives be short or long,
They must be full of love to thee,
And prayer and praise ne'er cease to be
The burden of our daily song.

STANZAS.

Life is not all a pleasant dream
To those who walk discreetly;
Its changes, like a wondrous theme,
Tax mind and strength completely.

However meaningless, at times,
May seem God's providences;
Again, like hidden thoughts in rhymes,
They touch our finer senses.

We can but watch the threads that go
To make what we call chances;
So fine we sometimes scarcely know
If they were more than fancies.

SO FEW.

We count them over slowly,
The friends that used to bless;
The strong ones, and the lowly,
Each year we find them less.
Death takes a goodly number,
And bears them from our sight;
Some leave us while we slumber,
And some in morning's light.

Friends who have walked beside us
For many a weary day,
Some morning meet and chill us,
Like cool north winds in May.

Estranged? Ah yes! we waken
Full oft with fevered start,
To find ourselves forsaken
By some strong, earnest heart.

We heard no evil whisper,
We sat no door ajar;
And yet a dear one left us—
So near, and now so far!
'T were vain to try to win them
By words they used to know,
Some rhymes by repetition
Lose all their olden glow.

Perhaps a word was spoken
In strange or idle mood;
Perhaps a promise broken
We thought so fair and good.

Or, when our cares were heavy,
And kind words needed sore,
They brought us what but made us
More weary than before.

How many come when Pleasure,
Our welcome guest, is here!
How fond they are! how charming!
Our own for ever dear.
For ever! lo the shadows
Scarce touch our "promised land"
Ere they have flown and left us
Once more alone to stand.

Some leave us with a burden
We had not thought to bear;
A weight of care and sorrow
Our kindness sought to share.

Some leave us rifled, empty,
But little did they bring,
Yet, leaving, they have robbed us
Of many a precious thing.

Our friends, we count them slowly,
The dear ones love has crowned,
The few who understand us,
And in our hearts are found.
Estranged, afar or weary,
Alas! what shall we do?
They never were o'er plenty,
And now they are so few!

OUR OWN.

Our cottage may be small, the landscape tame;
Our flowers may lack a new, high-sounding name;
Our chosen paths be rocky or wind-blown;
And yet we love our own!

The little child that sits beside our feet
May rob us of our strength and rest so sweet,
And cause our way with cares to be thick strewn;
And yet we love our own!

There may be fairer lands and brighter skies,
There may be friends more faithful or more wise
Than any we have ever seen or known;
But each will love his own!

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

How was it? Well, at first he came and went
As others did, he talked with each in turn;
His mind on farming suddenly was bent;
He seemed desirous every way to learn;
He told the boys of many a new intent;
Talked with the mother of her patent churn.
The flattered father felt himself most wise,
Such growing interest lit the stranger's eyes.

And then, somehow, he always seemed to find
An empty seat by Lucy; and he took
To holding thread for her small hands to wind;
Sometimes we caught a shy, admiring look

In his brown eyes, a gesture, more than kind,
Of his strong hand; one day we found a book,
Gilt-edged, and nice, among our Lucy's things;
A new gold band outshone her other rings.

And soon he lingered by the porch at night,
Forgetful of the heavy dews that fell,
While Lucy, with her blue eyes all alight,
Would bring her weary father from the well
A cooling draught, and then, as if by right,
He joined her there; there seemed so much to tell,
Or hear, — it matters little to my rhymes, —
Her pitcher overflowed a dozen times.

So things went on until the mother found
That Lucy, who was such a model child,
Had thrice forgotten in her morning round
To skim the milk; and, like a tangled wild,

Grew every day her bit of garden ground,
Where once the roses and carnations smiled.
It was the old, old story, and you know
That naught but marriage out of that can grow.

EARLY HOME AND FRIENDS.

A pleasant valley 'twixt low-lying hills!
Thy charms were many to my youthful eyes.
When summer sunshine all the meadow fills
Thou' rt still to me a nook of paradise;
A home-like feeling in the air distills,
Thou' st greener grasses, and far bluer skies,
A happy valley where the blue-birds sing,
And orioles cradled in their hammocks swing.

Here was the cottage; and the summer sun
Kissed the bright dew-drops from the heart-shaped leaves
Of morning glories, that in riot ran
From emerald sward unto the mossy eaves,

Wooed by Virginia creepers, aye, and won, —
A closer compact than the rose-vine weaves, —
Swayed in the wind, and clung as close and fond,
E'en when the frost-king had annulled the bond.

The brook that wound its way through flowery banks
And sunny meadows, where the waves of light
Swept o'er field lilies, and the moving ranks
Of star-eyed grasses, beautiful and bright,
Swaying and tossing in the wind's mad pranks,
Was e'er to me a cheerful, pleasant sight;
It mirrored oft a face I used to know,
A child's glad face, lost sight of long ago.

I close my eyes, and lo! once more I stand
And gaze, in fancy, on the hill-side fair,
Or seat myself upon the bridge that spanned
The limpid stream; so meager was its share
Of rustic beauty, and so idly planned,

I, childlike, fancied it had drifted there
Some dismal night amid the tempest's roar, —
The wreck of something fashioned long before.

Ah! how the years roll slowly, softly back,
In one great tidal wave, and leave me free
Of dear-bought wisdom! and its cords grow slack
Sitting once more upon a father's knee, —
His arm around me, I did feel no lack
Of hope's bright promises, or faith in thee.
Thou did'st half guess, and even then foretell
Thy daughter's heritage, now known full well.

Blue-eyed and calm was she whose hands did fold
My childish garments in those early years;
Checking ambitions that grew over-bold,
Or wondering at some April gush of tears
That had no cause — at least that could be told —
Born not of budding hopes, or dark-winged fears.

My mother! with such temperament as mine,
I needed that strong tenderness of thine.

Pleasant, but grave; a face that often wore
A serious, far-off look, as if the light
Of all her life had wandered on before,
Leaving but shadows in her weary sight.
Not a sad face, but one that always bore
A tender thoughtfulness that charmed us quite.
Her loving words, her patience we recall,—
Where, gentle mother, did thy mantle fall?

One more there was, with darkly beaming eyes,
Possessed of energy we bowed before,
Whose inborn strength was always a surprise;
Whose way with thorns was scattered o'er and o'er;
Who grew each passing year more true and wise,
And missing *this*, but strove for *that* the more;

Whose love of justice and whose hate of wrong
Were fixed as fate, as stormy passion strong.
Ah, Fortune! how thou did'st forsake and wound!
How few the roses in her pathway found!

My childhood's summers! how the blue drifts back
That draped their skies! and e'en the sunset glow
Of gold and crimson is by no means slack
To gild the picture; and the winds that blow
Across my brow all whisper of the track
I then marked out, — the path I thought to go;
I was so young, and feet are prone to stray;
I left it when its charms had passed away.

LAUS DEO.

Watch, while I pray!
It may be day will dawn at length;
It may be light will bring me strength;
It has alway.

Pray, while I watch!
How thick the darkness round me falls!
How solemnly the night-wind calls!
Pray, while I watch.

Oh, watch and pray!
I have no thought of aught but praise
To Him who crowns with light my ways,
In this glad day!

DREAMS OF FAME.

How strangely sweet the first bright dreams of fame
That come to most before a score of years
Have set their mark upon us! For a name
We all do more than at the first appears.
Some will deny the charge and quench the flame
Of their desires; but all will mingle tears
Of grief and disappointment when they die,
Or sit in sackcloth by them silently.

We feel that much lies far beyond us, but
This one and that has done so much, and we
Will not stand idle, eyes and ears both shut,
But in some sheltered nook of the To Be

We will be great and good; and then we put
All obstacles aside, resolved to see
A mark of ours upon the roll of fame,
E'en if we fail to write thereon our name.

'Tis well. It draws the weary feet of some
Who else would loiter idly by the way;
Too deaf to hear the Spirit bid them come,
Too weak, or sorrowful, to watch and pray;
Too drowsy with society's loved hum
To even seek in fairer paths to stray.
'T is better to aspire, and rise to fall,
Than never to have known a height at all.

Our dreams are vapor! aye, but still they make
A fringe-like border to the tent of time.
They span the present with a bridge and wake
A bevy of bright thoughts, and hopes sublime.

It is not every one who will forsake
A sunny vale, the mountain steep to climb.
Who will may gain a view of brighter skies;
By every step in life the soul should rise.

OUR JUBILEE.

Written for the Centennial Celebration at Manchester N. H, July 4, 1876.

1776 — 1876.

Let us turn o'er this golden day,
When even sober fancies play,
And weary hearts forget what grieves,
Our country's book — its hundred leaves.
A hundred leaves! a hundred years!
How strange the opening page appears!
A mighty nation then had birth
Whose name was heard in all the earth,
Preëminent among the free,
The sacred home of Liberty.

God's blessing brought her wealth and fame,
While honors clustered round her name.

To-day that nation greeting sends
To all who are the nation's friends;
Triumphant song her bosom stirs,
Glad tidings of great joy are hers;
A queen she sits in glory dressed,—
Rejoice with her, for she is blest.
Her grateful children, far and near,
Will hold this day in memory dear;
While thousands more her colors wear,
And thank her for her fostering care.
Let banners wave, and bells be rung,
And many a sweet "Te Deum" sung.

This is her year of Jubilee,
Which millions thrill with joy to see;

Attained through years of war and woe,
By many a hard and timely blow;
But after wounds came healing balm,
And after winds and waves a calm.
The records of her noble deeds
Crowd all the pages as one reads.
Sometimes he starts in glad surprise,
Sometimes is mute with wondering eyes.
How manifold her blessings grown!
No other land is like our own.

Turn quick the pages darkly red
With brothers' blood, so madly shed;
To-day we pass them softly by,
Without a tear, with scarce a sigh.
Not all in vain the lesson sent,
And blood and treasure freely spent;
The foulest stain our banner bore,

Thank God, will never shame us more,
While North and South more wise appear,
For these few leaves which cost so dear.
We put them by like troubled dreams,—
The present page with glory beams.

We hear the wild Atlantic's roar,
Or walk the far Pacific's shore;
Stand awed amid the northern snows,
Or languid where the orange blows;
Alaska's icy valleys thread,
The arid plains of Utah tread,
Or seek the western wilds so still,
And drink of nature's cup our fill;
Kind, friendly hands our own will grasp,
Our country holds us in her clasp.
Extending far, from zone to zone,
From sea to sea is all our own.

He·e, 'mid our grand New England hills,
Where beauty, like the dew, distills
From every cloud that floats between
Her mountain tops, from every green
Encircled lake, whose smiling face
Wears year by year an added grace,
Where every stream is clear and bright,
And wood and wave both charm the sight,
Our country's record grows more dear
With every swift, succeeding year;
Her welfare nearer to the heart,
Her honor of our life a part.

How cool the Merrimack flows on!
It seems to take a softened tone
Beside the green and honored grave
Of Stark, the patriot, true and brave.
His fame is ours, — his deeds shall tell
How long our heroes fought, how well.

New Hampshire's sons with noble grace,
In history hold an honored place.
Her soldiers were a faithful band;
Her statesmen with the foremost stand,
And one, at least, has fame world-wide,—
We point to Webster's name with pride.

Our future, who but God can know?
Yet all our skies with promise glow.
"Our bulwarks are the hearts of men,"
And strong and true they beat as when,
A hundred years ago, their sires
Built up the sacred altar fires.
May wisdom be their future guide,
With truth and love on either side!
With them, what glorious things are wrought!
Without them, labor brings us naught.
May God uphold with mighty hand,
And bless indeed this happy land!

A CHILD'S GRAVE.

We walked within the "Valley's" shade
One cool and clear October day,
The time when Nature's garlands fade,
And droop beside each sylvan way.

The autumn wind, with sob and stir,
Sent many a trophy through the air;
How white the sacred headstones were!
The marble monuments, how fair!

We stopped near one and lingered long;
Others were just as tall and white,
But this one pleased us like a song,
And charmed capricious Fancy quite.

It bore the marks of wealth and taste,
  It seemed to breathe of something more,
Of sunny pictures, fair and chaste,
  Brought hither from some foreign shore.

Low down beside where grasses waved,
  And sunbeams lay so warm and bright,
We found a little peaceful grave
  Marked with a tiny cross of white.

Sweet symbol of both loss and gain,
  What else so fitting o'er our dead?
It told of faith that reached through pain,
  And anchored where no tears are shed.

A child, we thought, whose friends still grieve
  Because, alas! its days were few;
Who left, as only such can leave,
  A spotless record, pure and true.

The idol of some mother's love,
With all its sweet, capricious ways,
One of the "Kingdom," called above,
And gone before the "evil days."

And was it one a long time dead?
Perhaps the cross a record bore:
Low down upon its base we read,
"Her name was Florence," — nothing more.

LIFE'S LESSONS.

Alas! why do we try our strength so soon,
As if we feared a surplus when the years
In their slow round should find us at high noon?
Oh, more and more the way of life appears
A labyrinth, where friends awhile commune,
Then lose each other 'mid the doubts and fears
That rise like mist, but gather into rain; —
The brightest ways are lined and crossed with pain.

Desire, like some strange, fitful, April storm,
Will masquerade, sometimes, in gala dress;
We think our hearts with gratitude are warm,
Or filled with sadness for a friend's distress;

Probe deeper — ah, 't is but another form
Of our old enemy, our selfishness!
It crowds its way like one in desperate need;
Who knows his heart's desires is wise indeed.

Hard lessons seem most plentiful in school
When the long term is drawing to a close;
We grow so weary of a common rule
That gives us naught to question or oppose, —
Our brain grows torpid, and our heart grows cool;
Our patience lessens looking unto those
Who follow in our wake with scarce a fear,
Not knowing that the way will cost so dear.

It is the same in life. Thrown round and round —
Thrown seems a word just fitted for the place —
Like children's balls we bound and then rebound,
Now touching ground, now whirling on through
space.

What wonder if we should sometimes be found
Outside the course, or beaten in life's race.
Our circumstances toss us here and there,
Our wills, dismayed, cry out "It is not fair."

Hush, heart, sore-tried! thou hast grown sick or sad
With too much musing as day follows day;
The world has much to make us gay and glad,
And life is not, nor ever will be play.
Choose thou the good and bright, and let the bad,
Dark, misanthropic visions melt away,
If melt they will — we look for fairer skies.
Who will may grieve; we would be strong and wise.

SUCCESS

I did not think that I should dream of this,
So often banished from my waking thoughts;
There was a time it held a thread of bliss,
And in and out through all my being wrought;
It brooded o'er each twilight with a kiss,
And thrilled me with the pleasure that it brought.
Now when a step is gained, a hill o'ercome,
So many rise beyond me I am dumb.

The promise that it made long years ago
Has lost no portion of its charm for me;
It sparkles still with all its olden glow,
Has hidden mines of wealth I fain would see.

I covet it, and yet full well I know,
If it should crown me in the years to be,
I still should roam as one who cannot rest,
I still should wake to many a day unblest.

Have we all guardian angels? Do they come
And stand beside our couches when we sleep,
And grieve when we are lost amid the hum
Of worldly gossip? Do they sometimes creep
Closer beside us when we sit so dumb,
Our hardened hearts a vast unbroken deep?
When we are powerless, prayerless, do they grieve
Above the fatal spell our sins did weave?

Have I a guardian angel? Then I pray
That evermore it may beside me stand
To guard me from the dangers of the way,
And lend to me a ready helping hand;

When I am weak and faint, and fain would stay
My weary feet upon enchanted land,
Hide me within the shadow of her wing,
And guide me safely to my Lord and King.

A FABLE RETOLD.

Nature, in a most hopeful mood one day,
A challenge sent to Education: "Pray,
My worthy sister, if you dare, we'll try
And prove which is the stronger, you, or I.
We'll each select a tree to work upon,
Then we will try to see what can be done.
I shall do what I can to hinder you,
And you will vex me, as you always do.
You think that you can conquer; let us see."
And Education did at once agree.

Nature went forth and chose a forest pine:
"Do what you will," she said, "this tree is mine."

Straight as an arrow, tall and fair it stood
Just on the border of an old oak wood.
Slender, as yet, but green and promising,
While tender trailing vines about it cling,
Symmetrical and sound from root to crest.
Already had a robin built her nest
'Mid the green boughs that looked so fresh and soft.
It held its royal, emerald head aloft;
Its ancestors, for years, great honors bore,
One had been main-mast of a "man-of-war."

Close by, a pleasant field in sunshine lay,
Its thick green carpet decked with daisies gay;
There Education found an apple-tree,—
Only a crab, but young, and strong, and free.
"I will choose this," she said; while Nature thought
(Already were her schemes with mischief fraught),

"My sister fair, small good from it you'll get,
I can so easily your plans upset."

Both grew apace; but Nature soon began
Maliciously her sister's tree to scan.
Then soon appeared some knotty, rugged shoots,
This way and that they grew, as if disputes
Had risen suddenly and come between,
Some pointing north, while others southward lean.
Gnarled, crooked roots protruded here and there,
And not a single branch was straight or fair.
But Education pruned and pruned again,
Covered the knotty roots, enriched the plain,
Removing here and there a truant spray,
While Nature, ever ready in the way,
Pushed others just as rugged in their place,
Depriving it of beauty and of grace;
And day by day more shabby still it grew,

While Education did this plan pursue.
At last a lucky thought her brain conceived, —
The tree of many a branch she soon relieved,
Then grafted shoots from other trees thereon,
Such trees as oft the best of fruit had borne.
Years passed, and lo! in time, fair, thrifty wood
Laden with ripened apples, sound and good.

Meanwhile, how fared it with the stately pine
Which Nature meant should be her perfect sign,
A fair exponent of the strength she had,
Whose royal beauty could but make one glad?
While still it grew, so fair, and fresh, and young,
And all the country with its praises rung,
Staid Education 'round its top did pass
A fine, strong cord, and drew it down,— alas!
(Its slender, pliant branches bent, not broke)
And fastened it unto a neighboring oak

Which had, for half a century, firmly stood,
A royal monarch of the dim old wood.
In vain it tried to rear its stately head;
In vain its lower branches upward sped;
And all in vain it took a deeper root,
And clothed in fresher green each tiny shoot.
Swayed from its purpose, of its beauty shorn,
It looked, to passers-by, a thing forlorn.
Nature, as is her wont, worked with a will,
But Education showed one stronger still.

So years went by, till on one pleasant day
Nature and Education met. The way
Was bordered by fair gardens, newly made,
And thrifty trees, in their spring garb arrayed.
Nature spoke first: "I see that it is true
You have the power to spoil the best I do."
And Education pleasantly replied:

"To do our very best we both have tried.
You make my way, at times, both hard and rough,
But something can be done if pains enough
Is wisely taken. Henceforth let us be
Sworn friends; I've need of you, and you of me."

THE GREAT REWARD.

1 Cor. ii: 9.

"Eye hath not seen." O human eye!
Bewildered by the earth below,
The matchless glories of the sky,
The shining waves that ebb and flow,
The flowers with all their varied tints,
Brighter than ever monarch wore,—
Are these fair things indeed but hints
Of what our Father has in store?

"Ear hath not heard." O human ear!
Charmed with the music of the sea,
Filled with the sounds that greet thee here,
Rejoicing in their harmony,

Entranced by every word and tone
From loving lips that rise and fall,
Hast thou, indeed, then, never known
The heavenly sounds that will enthrall?

"No heart conceives." Strange human heart,
Proud of thine unseen depths below,
Buoyed by the hopes that from thee dart,
Is there still more for thee to know?
Capacious heart, that burns and thrills,
And throbs again with ecstasy,—
When earth-born joys such caverns fill,
How deep the heavenly tide must be!

"For those who love Him." Weary soul,
Drink deeply of the promised bliss.
How round and beautiful the whole
Of one great promise such as this!

O wondrous ocean of God's love!
Beyond all comprehension wide,
Thy waves will bear the saints above,
Where all are more than satisfied.

FOUR AND FOUR.

There was a pleasant group around the fire
Ofttimes at eventide, when winter days
Grew short and cold ; the blazing logs flashed higher
Till the wide room grew cheerful in the blaze.
To add their share of mirth each did aspire,
Sometimes in gay, sometimes in graver ways;
They cracked both nuts and jokes, and did their best
To put the aches and pains of life to rest.

A pleasant, merry group! Five rosy girls —
All sisters, save a dark one, hazel-eyed, —
And three tall brothers, one with dark brown curls,
Who tried to see life on its sunny side;
And one had raven hair, and teeth like pearls, —

The eldest brother, and their joy and pride.
A few short years ago and all were there;
Not one now lingers round the mother's chair!

One faded in a Western land, and came
With three fair children to the parent nest,
Hoping the olden breeze would fan life's flame
Till it should brighten; but there came no rest,
No buoyant strength to her enfeebled frame,—
The days were weary, and the nights unblest.
Soon, with her babe, she found the heavenly way,
Its sinless feet unstained by earthly clay.

The second sister pale and paler grew,
And shadows deepened in her soft gray eye;
Her smile was just as sweet, her heart as true,
And yet we felt, as year by year went by,
That hers, however numbered, were but few.

The messenger of death was often nigh,
And while he waited by her, close at hand,
He took the third dear sister of the band.

Days came and went; and then we softly said,
While speaking of the loved ones "gone before,"
That three of them were gathered with the dead.
But one was left; we loved her more and more
As months went by; beloved, and wooed, and wed,
The cup of life for her seemed running o'er.
So young, so fair, to many hearts so dear,
We seemed to need her while we lingered here.

Alas, alas! she faded like the rest!
Just as the south wind dies above the moor,
Just as the crimson fades from out the west,
Just as the lily fades, as slow and sure.
We think of her as one whose lot was blest;

We think of her as one whose life was pure;
The stricken parents walk with slower tread,
Their pale brows crowned with many a silver thread.

The elder brother sought a Southern land,
Far from his olden haunts and friends away,
Watched the dark clouds of war on either hand,
The eager throng that gathered for the fray;
Saw Northern brows by Southern breezes fanned,
And wore in shame and grief the rebel gray!
Not long, for Northern blood beat strong and high;
Deserter, next, and yet he did not die!

But ere he clothed himself in loyal blue
He sickened in the "prison pens," and lay
Wounded and faint, but faithful still, and true,
In dismal swamp and wood for many a day,
Fed by his sable brothers; while the two

Whom fortune favored labored far away.
Dark years were those when loving ones were lost,
And liberty grew dear, so great its cost!

And last and least of all that merry throng,
And yet akin, — the girl with hazel eyes, —
She lived to grieve above her country's wrong,
And, though uncounted mid the brave or wise,
Sometimes she gives the busy world a song;
With heavy heart, sometimes she gives a sigh
In memory of that band. Which are the blest,
The four that linger here, or those at rest?

MY PROMISE.

I had a promise, — whence it came, or how,
I scarcely know; 't was not by word or sign;
And when it came I cannot tell you now;
I think it was one evening, fair and fine,
When lily-buds their dewy heads did bow, —
A sacred promise, and 't was wholly mine.
Perhaps an angel dropped it from the sky,
Perhaps a fairy, as she flitted by.

' Twas sweet as manna, and it grew and grew,
While other promises, that once were fair,
Looked dwarfed beside it, and full soon I knew
No other promise could with this compare.

I sometimes wondered if it could be true;
I questioned earth, and sea, and sky, and air.
A score of years have left me waiting still
To see if time that promise will fulfill.

GROWING OLD.

Softly, O softly! the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee lightly, with tenderest care;
Sorrow and death did they often bring nigh thee,
Yet they have left thee but beauty to wear,
Growing old gracefully, gracefully fair.

Far from the storms that are lashing life's ocean,
Nearer each day to the welcome home light;
Far from the waves that were wild with commotion,
Under full sail, and the harbor in sight,—
Growing old cheerily, cheerful and bright.

Past all the winds that were adverse and chilling,
Past all the islands that lured thee to rest;

Past all the currents that wooed thee, unwilling,
Far from the port and the home of the blest,
Growing old peacefully, peacefully blest.

Never a feeling of envy or sorrow,
When the bright faces of children are seen;
Never a year from their youth wouldst thou borrow,
Thou dost remember what lieth between, —
Growing old willingly, gladly, I ween.

Rich in experience that angels might covet,
Rich in a faith that has grown with thy years;
Rich in the love that grew from and above it,
Soothing thy sorrows, and hushing thy fears, —
Growing old wealthily, loving and dear.

Hearts, at the sound of thy footsteps, are lightened;
Ready and willing thy hand to relieve;

Many a face at thy coming has brightened, —
"It *is* more blessed to give than receive."
Growing old happily, blest, we believe.

Eyes that grow dim to the earth and its glory
See but the brighter, the heavenly glow;
Ears that are dull to the world and its story
Drink in the songs that from Paradise flow!
All thy sweet recompense we cannot know.

Fourscore! but softly the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee lightly, with tenderest care;
Sorrow, and death, too, have often been nigh thee,
Yet they have left thee but beauty to wear, —
Growing old gracefully, gracefully fair.

A DREAM.

To Mrs. S. B. H.

I dreamed that I had a magic pen,
With a point like a diamond bright,
And I wrote your name on a snowy scroll,
Each letter a line of light.

And then I drew with an artist hand
A garland of blossoms fair;
Bright dewy buds, and an ivy spray,
And some plumy ferns were there.

Unfinished still, till with magic pen,
With its diamond point aflame,
Entwined with yours, and the fadeless wreath,
I traced there a sister's name.

Her flower-strewn grave attests the love
That can never leave your heart;
And the loved and lost, and the living, to me,
Can never be far apart.

Could the dream come true, as some I have known,
I would take the magic pen,
And twined together your names should glow,
And the flowers should bloom again.

A MESSAGE.

O purple pansies! did ye speak to me?
Ye have grown regal, though so lowly born.
It is a pleasant thing, we think, to be,
Amid the dewy freshness of the morn,
The loveliest thing for all the eyes to see
That have been seeking since the early dawn
For floral beauties in the garden beds.
O purple pansies, lift your drooping heads!

Sweet, speaking faces,—little messengers
That thrive amid the shadows cool and deep,—
Your welcome greeting many a memory stirs,
Your cheerful looks will put our doubts to sleep.

What message bring you? Is it one of hers?
And did she ask of you to take and keep
Until you saw us? She had violet eyes,
And looked, O purple pansies! good and wise.

We miss her. Ah! the days and nights were long
When she went from us, and the dreams we had
No longer cheered us like a morning song;
The evening found us silent, — often sad.
We did not wish her back; we knew it wrong;
But, Oh! we could not be as gay and glad
As we had been. Sweet little messengers,
Ye are thrice welcome since ye speak of her!

She said we must not grieve. That's like her too;
She told us so full oft when we did sigh;
She said that we should make our lives more true,
That it was best to raise our standard high.

The higher ground we took, the broader view,
'T would make us humble as the years went by.
So, purple pansies, ye did come from her?
She had not found a better messenger.

THE WASTE OF YEARS.

Make haste, O soul! and put away
  The hopes that once were thine,—
That shone upon thee for a day
  And then did cease to shine.

Make haste, and gather, one by one,
  The plans so vainly tried;
Along the vales they smoothly run,
  Upon the hills they died.

Gather the fears that held thee close,
  Locked in their cold embrace,
When on the wings of faith ye rose,
  To struggle for a place.

Gather the wishes, wise and good,
Ye harbored night and day,
And all the hindrances that stood
And mocked them in the way.

The waste of years! Some of it glows
As when the woof was spun,
With all the hues of gold and rose
By which our hearts were won.

A goodly pile! O heart of mine!
It drained thy warmest blood,
And many an hour of shade and shine
It kept thee far from God.

It still may serve as Folly's cure,
Seen as its monument;
Around its top the air is pure,
And perfumed with content.

How broad the outlook when we stand
Above our hopes and fears!
How narrow all the ways we planned,
Seen from the Waste of Years!

THE CHILDREN.

I see fond mothers leading by the hand
The fair, sweet children, with their sunny brows;
The precious links that form the household band,
The little wells of sunshine in the house;
In days to come, a power o'er all the land,
Who knows but that their voices will arouse
Some slumbering echoes that shall roll and rest
In waves of penitence on many a breast.

The children! God forgive us if we gaze,
Sometimes with longing eyes and lips compressed,
While wandering through the city's busy ways,
Its lanes and alleys, where there is no rest

On summer nights, and winter's weary days
Are filled with sights and sounds to them unblest.
Forgive us, if we find it hard to give
Our own to Death while such as these can live.

A BIRTHDAY.

To M. G. R.

The morn is so fair, that, if sunny June
  In one of her sunniest moods had brought it,
We might have said it had come too soon,
  But very lovely we should have thought it.

The lake is blue as the summer sky
  That sweetly, grandly, arches it over;
The golden bees flit lazily by,
  Or swing themselves on the crimson clover.

The tiny boats, with their noisy freight,
  Are hither, thither, and all ways darting;
One hastily moored as if too late,
  Another, with white sails, slowly starting.

The trees that hang o'er the waters blue
Are scarcely as green as those below it;
Ideal and real — the false and true,
But both are so fair it is hard to know it.

There is plenty to eat and drink, and that
For even the latest, slowest comer;
There are mirth and song, and the quiet chat
Of those who have passed life's golden summer.

The hammocks, swung from the forest trees,
By the happy crowd are heavy laden;
A child rocks now on the gentle breeze,
Anon, 'tis a laughing youth or maiden.

A merry throng, and a scene so bright
We fancy the angels smile above it;
Our fair young friend has a step so light
That even the children well might covet.

We remember her as a little child,—
A winsome, helpful, restless mortal,
In speech and gesture so quaint and wild,—
And now she has reached fair freedom's portal.

We wish her a hundred returns of the day,
Were the all-wise Father pleased to give them,
With choicest blessings to brighten the way,
And His grace and strength to rightly live them.

With the fairest pictures in memory's hall
The scenes of the day will long be glowing.
Ah well! how quickly the twilight falls!
It is time that you and I were going.

A REVELATION.

I had gathered from fresh little grasses
The dew still alight on each leaf;
Their pendulous blossoms just bursting
In beauty, so perfect, so brief!

And when 'neath the glass I had placed them,
And viewed them, thus magnified, o'er,
I summoned the shy little maiden,
Who sat, with her dolls, on the floor.

Quick she came, with a light, breezy motion,
And carelessly leaned on my chair;
And when she had looked at the wonder
I asked if she knew what was there.

No answer; but eyes growing wider,
Lips quivering apart, red and sweet,
The quick, nervous clasping of fingers,
The silence that shadowed her feet.

"What is it, my darling? Pray tell me."
She lifted her wonder-wide eyes,—
I fancied her words would be wanting,
So sudden and strange the surprise.

But the answer came, slowly and sweetly,
With a reverence pleasing to see:
"It looks like—'the power—and the glory—
For ever and ever'—to me."

THE WORLD'S STORY.

"In the beginning"—when was that?
Ah! minds of finite measure,
Stopped short before the Infinite,
And forced to wait His pleasure,
Our world is small, as wise men find,
But, ah! it holds a story
Beyond the grasp of human mind,
Whate'er its fame or glory.

Some lines are hid in chalk hills white,
And some in mountain granite;
The coal beds gave a gleam of light,
And scientists did fan it.

They place their fragments side by side,
Give many a learned lecture,
But still have naught the gaps to hide
Save words of vain conjecture.

A wise man finds a glowing line,
Another straightway mars it;
One sees a way he might define,
How quick another bars it!
While common minds are puzzled quite
Who strive to make alliance
'Twixt science versus Bible light,
Or Bible versus science.

And still new theories arise,
As plan with plan is measured;
They search the water, earth and skies,
And every hint is treasured.

But, lo! a point, "fixed" long ago,
Gives way to doubts unbidden;
'T is scarce the prelude which we know,
The story still is hidden.

A REMINISCENCE.

Wait for me, sister, I have longed so much
To stand with you beside the cottage door.
This was our home; I think of it as such;
To me a joy, to you it must be more.
I thought I should be quite content to touch
The outer waves upon the ocean shore —
The great world ocean — when I last was here;
My aims and purposes were never clear.

Come with me, sister, to the breezy hill
We left that morning many years ago;
Perhaps the azure lupines crown it still,
And we can listen to the water's flow.

I wonder why they let our father's mill —
It stood just here — go down to ruin so.
Are these the same old elm-trees that we knew,
And that the meadow where the lilies grew?

We were but four; we are, alas! but two.
Help me to gather childhood's threads of gold;
There were some, were there not? However few,
I would that all their number might be told.
Some glowed for one that were but dim to you, —
Some years seem made of winters, rude and cold.
You were the eldest, and remember best,
Are you quite sure those early days were blest?

Do you remember one great plan I had?
Most rude of outline, in conception dim,
It's very mention made our father glad, —
We were, you know, the entire world to him.

With all the rosy light of hope 't was clad,
And marked for use on the far future's rim.
I found it there one day in after years,
The thought of it sometimes will bring the tears.

I found it, aye, and warmed it to a glow,
For it had grown, as many plans do, cold;
I said that it should help life's sluggish flow,
And bring me joys and comforts manifold.
I did the best I could with it; but, oh!
I found it dull and trite as tales twice told.
It was the goal of his ambition fond,
But, when I reached it, mine was leagues beyond.

THE GRAND ARMY.

With the dim rosy light of each morning,
An army of wants sally forth:
They come from the east, and the westward,
They come from the south and the north;
And under the brow of the morning,
Drawn up as in battle array,
They steal every silver-winged comfort,
And bear it in triumph away.

The army of wants! It is larger
Than any that Europe can boast;
It surges through village and city,
Is known at the mountains and coast.

Such thievish, demoralized generals!
Such privates! to know not were bliss!
Such an army of quaint masqueraders, —
Why, Lincoln's was nothing to this!

Undisciplined, each pressing forward
As if sure that the foremost would win,
Each forcing his claim on our notice,
Each swelling the tumult and din.
There 's no use whatever in flying,
They 're swifter and stronger than light;
Disband on your left, lo! they gather,
And cover the plains at your right.

All day, from some nook undiscovered,
Reïnforcements are brought to the ranks;
They stay not for kind invitations,
They wait not our pleasure or thanks.

If one fills his measure, and hies him
Away to the west, or the east,
Uprises a squadron of twenty,
With appetites craving a feast.

Grave fathers! a wing of this army
Lies wait every morn at your side;
Pale mothers! they rise up like specters
That nothing can frighten or hide.
You may close both your ears to their murmurs,
But still they will weary your sight,—
The first to appear in the morning,
The last to forsake you at night.

Few ever fall out by the wayside,
Thus saving you trouble and cost,
For each rides his own private charger,
Which seldom is wounded or lost.

Invincible, merciless, fearless!
Whatever kind Providence grants,
We need a large measure of courage
To meet this grand army of wants.

AN UNWRITTEN SONG.

It was my purpose long ago
To sing a song for thee,
I sought the rhymes that sweetest flow
To blend in harmony.

I wanted words all fair and bright
To shine upon the song
With inward purity and light,
Which unto thee belong.

Such words as poets use to praise,
Suggestive, rich, and rare,
Like rain drops pierced with sunny rays
Till rainbow hues are there.

As fresh as wind-flowers in the dells,
I said the song should be;
As musical as fairy bells,
Inspiring as the sea.

In one blest vision, all my own,
An endless chain I caught,
Of living links that burned and shone,
And every link a thought.

Could I have held it firm and fast,
What light had graced my pen!
The fancy was too bright to last;
It vanished there and then.

Unwritten words, I seek them still;
The muses were not true;
But, when their promise they fulfill,
I'll sing the song for you.

AT TWO-SCORE.

Wake, O soul! thy dreams are o'er!
Passing on "from shore to shore,"
Midway, thou art borne along
By a current swift and strong.
Childish fears no more appall,
Childish hopes no more enthrall;
Life is real! it demands
All the strength of heart and hands.

First it brought a score of years,
With alternate joys and tears;
Where thy hopes were round and full,
And thy fears showed dim and dull;

Scarcely seen beside the sea
Of the great and grand To Be, —
Widening sea, whose constant roar
Fills our ears till life is o'er.

Step by step, and day by day,
Passed the second score away;
Faith was from her anchor torn
By the fiery trials borne.
Many things unsought were found, —
Earth-born hopes on hallowed ground,
Idols in the sacred fane,
Losses which were counted gain.

What was sought and what was won,
What was planned and what was done,
What was hidden, what we hid,
What we dreamed, and dreaming did,

What we thought and what we knew,
What was false and what was true,
Drifted down the tide of years, —
Wide and deep the gulf appears.

Close beside a dancing stream
Once a maiden dreamed a dream;
Twice and thrice, but still the same,
Part of pleasure, part of fame.
In her dream a flower she found
Growing on enchanted ground,
And its buds of fancy bright
Filled her world with bloom and light.

Wake, O soul! take firmer stand!
Thou art far from childhood's land,
Freighted full; but what is gold,
What is dross, cannot be told;

Gain is loss, and loss is gain,
Love, and faith in God remain;
Past, and present, and To Be
Soon will be as one to thee.

A COUNTRY WEDDING.

"Come to the wedding," the letter said, —
We smiled as the earnest words we read, —
"Saturday next is the chosen day,
And you are not many miles away.
The knot will be tied in the dear home nest,
Of all places to me the best.
And, whether the day be foul or fair,
Be sure, my dear, you are wanted there;
So quit, for a while, the city's hum,
And, whatever happens, be sure to come."

We read it over, and scanned the sky;
A storm was coming, we thought it nigh.

"But then," we said, "it may over blow
With only a shower of silvery snow,
And that will be nothing, — of course we'll go."
On Thursday the snow began to fall;
It whitened the fences, and hid the wall.
At first, borne on by a gentle breeze,
It fluttered down through the leafless trees,
As sleepless as pain, as still as thought,
All day and night with a will it wrought.
The evergreen boughs were soft as down,
And even the stumps put on a crown;
While the rocky pastures grew white and fair,
As if the flocks of the world were there.
It came so thickly, and fell so fast,
The brightest faces grew grave at last.
We looked above, when the breeze did lull,
And the sky, like the earth, seemed crowded full
Of "the wild white bees" of the winter time,

So sweetly sung in the poet's rhyme.
We said, on Friday, "It must stop soon;"
But still it gathered from morn till noon,
And then, as if that were not enough,
The wind began to be slightly rough;
And it blew and blew till it blew a gale,
It shrieked, and howled, like a Banshee's wail;
It tossed the snow on its tireless wings
Till it changed the fashion of mundane things.
The valleys were swollen, and looked like hills;
The lakes had vanished; the brooks and rills
Went gliding on through such banks of snow
As threatened to stop their onward flow.
And the roads — ah me! what worse could befall?
There wasn't a road to be found at all!
But Saturday morning the wind did cease,
And left us the sky and the snow in peace.

"We never can go!" "We can, and will!"
"But only think of that tiresome hill;
'T is sure to be heaped from foot to crown."
"No matter," we said, "we are going down."
And go we did, as we meant to do,
For a horse and patience carried us through.

Some friends were missing, and some were there;
We looked at the bridal robes so fair,
And chatted over the presents given,—
For the "happy hour" was not till seven.
The clergyman came, for he took the day
To make the journey, a league away.
No rail was there, and no horse could climb
Through the cross-road drifts; so he took his time,
Stopping a moment, no doubt, to chat—
While passing a neighbor's—of this, or that.
I think—but 't is no concern of mine—

He stopped, somewhere by the way, to dine.
(A thoughtful pastor, who could be *gay*,
In a very honest, innocent way.)
But, just as the sun was sinking low,
He came waist deep, through the "beautiful snow."
And then, in the slowly gathering gloom,
We sat to wait for the absent groom.
The train would be due at half-past four,
But might be later, an hour or more,
For north and southward, and east and west,
The storm had been doing its worst — or best;
But the carriage went, not a moment late, —
It never would do for our friend to wait.

The clock struck four, and then five, then six;
We could but think what an "awkward fix"
'T would be for our friends, and the bride forlorn,
If the missing one did not come till morn.

Then came a summons to lunch and tea,
For waiting was weary work, you see;
And the bride's fond mother, with quiet grace,
Did the honors well; but her cheerful face
Grew a trifle grave when the meal was done,
And still no sign of the wished-for one.

At seven we said the train was late;
We said the same when the clock struck eight;
But silent we sat, and made no sign
When the bells far distant were ringing nine.
We thought of the waiting bride so dear,
And fondly hoped that she did not hear;
In an inner room she sat in state,
And merry maidens around did wait.
It was nearly ten, and the clock was slow,
And still no word from the missing beau;
Then a timid whisper from white lips went:
"Perhaps there has been an accident!"

Ah! was it real, or did we dream
We heard the approaching shriek of steam?
Was it but fancy? We listened again,
With eyes and ears to the window-pane;
But "Sister Annie" no brothers could see,
And the bride grew pale as a bride should be.
Again we heard it, or seemed to hear,
And waited in doubt, 'twixt hope and fear.
At last came the distant sound of bells,
And then on the frosty air it swells.
"They are close at hand!" "They're going by!"
"They're not! they have stopped!" was another's cry.
The messenger sent to meet the train
Was surely here; but we asked in vain,
If he was alone; if *he* had come.
Our roguish "Annie" was wisely dumb.
But a well-known voice at the open door

Soon told us the weary watch was o'er,
And the would-be groom was a myth no more.

The parlor was filled with guests at last,
And quickly the knot was tied, and fast;
And smiles and kisses were plenty there,
"For the groom was brave and the bride was fair."
The clock struck eleven, but what did we care?

TIME'S MISSION.

One mission of the years is well fulfilled,
They bring a calmness nothing else evokes;
It matters little who has toiled, or willed,
To turn their ivy branches into oaks, —
But grief's strong currents time has often chilled,
The fountains covered where they first awoke.
A blessed mission have the slow-spun years, —
They dry at length the deepest flow of tears.

LILACS AND LUPINES.

Spring-time and May-time! There came to my hand
Many a lilac with fresh, nodding plume,
Many a lupine the breezes had fanned,
Budding in beauty, or bursting in bloom.
Thanks to the donor! We knew him a friend
In the old years, when, as children, we stood
Under his trees that well-laden did bend,
Knowing him generous, believing him good.

Many a morning when summer was nigh,
Slowly if early, and quickly if late,
Two little girls tripped soberly by,
In through his orchard, and out at his gate,—

School-girls in sun-bonnets, laden with books,
Culling the lupines so fresh and so blue,
Greeting the fairest and freshest with looks
Wholly admiring, child-like and true;

Watching the lilacs that grew by the door,
Nodding their clusters so queenly and tall,
Gracefully bending when storms gathered o'er,
Glad at their blooming, and sad at their fall;
Wistfully watching the roses in white,
Eagerly counting the buds on each spray,
Silently grateful, but full of delight,
When they might bear one in triumph away.

Lupines and lilacs, so dewy and fair!
These from the skies seem to borrow their hue,
Those with their plumes have so regal an air,—
One in the purple, and one in the blue.

Lilacs and lupines! Oh, many a one
Sees in the past, down the vista of years,
Kissed by the zephyrs, and warmed by the sun,
Bowers of fragrance and beauty appear!

We have a bower, and never a spring
Warms into summer ere we have been there;
Round it the sweetest perfumes ever cling,
Over it wanders the balmiest air.
Memory guards it, and hers the key;
Year after year she has opened the door;
Lilacs and lupines have blossomed for me,—
These are as fresh as the loved ones of yore.

"CROWN JEWELS."

Open hands, that scatter blessings
Where earth's weary ones abide;
White, or black, or brown, no matter,
If they only open wide,
Giving with no stinted measure
What they have and hold therein,
Giving with a heart-felt pleasure
What, perchance, was hard to win;
Open mid the harvest plenty,
Servants of a generous will,—
Such the Lord will bless and strengthen,
Open hands the Lord will fill.

Open eyes, that see the beauty
Of a world that God has made,

Eyes that see the post of duty
Though with crosses overlaid,
Prophet-eyes that scan the future,
With an earnest, hopeful ray,
Smiling when the sunbeams glisten,
Shining through the shadows gray,—
Trials will but make them tender,
Tears will only make them bright;
Waiting gives an added splendor,
Watching brings a holier light.

Open lives, that need no cover
Even in their highest noon,
Lives of faithful, strong endeavor,
Cherished as a sacred boon;
Brave with manly, Christian courage,
Patient with a purpose true,
All that weakens held beneath them,

All that strengthens kept in view;
Such as need no borrowed lustre,
Faith their seal, and truth their bond,
Lives that richer grow, and broader,
As they near the life beyond.

AT EVENTIDE.

Day is done! The hush of twilight
  Flutters softly o'er our lips,
And the still creeping shadows,
  Wrap us in their gray eclipse.
In the West a crimson glory
  Crowns the mountains far and wide;
Oh, what glints from fields celestial
  Cross our way at eventide!

Through the misty veil of shadows,
  Woven by the by-past years;
One by one the bright days glisten,
  One by one each hope appears.

Thoughts that once were blest in coming,
Words with pleasant scenes allied,
Long forgotten song and story
Wander back at eventide.

Sunny faces seen in childhood,
Or, perchance, in dreamland found;
Crowned with light, or dim in shadow,
Seem to gather softly round.
Quick our lips have ceased their laughter,
And the merry jest has died;
Tenderly we greet the faces
From the past at eventide.

Oh, what hopes loom up before us,
Each with Heaven's own halo crowned;
Each before the other pressing,
Like a throng on pleasure bound,

Paler grow the earth's vain trappings,
Weaker grows ambitious pride —
Pain and passion both lie sleeping,
Hushed like babes, at eventide.

Dull the ears that hear no music
On these solemn summer eves;
Dim the eyes that see no brightness,
Save what moon and starlight weaves.
Nearer steal the guardian angels
To the tempted and the tried;
Weak the heart that beats no truer
To itself at eventide.

Not an hour like this can charm us,
Keystone of the arch of day!
Mothers press the children closer,
Fathers take the homeward way,

Resting from our weary labors,
Silent sitting side by side,
All thy charms we scarce can gather,—
Thou art full, O, eventide!

STANZAS.

Beloved Harp, thou hast grown strange of late,
  Thy strings when swept give an uncertain sound.
Hast thou, too, entered in a league with fate
  To draw us hence from the enchanted ground?
We fain would linger and with patience wait,—
  That which we covet may at last be found,
If thou wilt stand our friend. O friend of years!
Hast thou not been an outlet for our tears?

When Passion pushed fair Reason to the wall,
  And swept away our better thoughts in scorn,
When Pride, slow rising from some grievous fall
  With dusty robes, looked more and more forlorn,

How often have we heard thy well-known call, —
With this to please us, or of that to warn.
A welcome aid — how much to thee we owe,
Since thou did'st catch our spirit's overflow!

If friends betrayed us, then we turned to thee;
If foes assailed us when we felt secure,
If darkness gathered when we fain would see,
And ways forbidden did our feet allure,
Thou hadst in trust for us a magic key,
Whose kindly aid did help us to endure
The evils weighing down our own weak hands;
Thou wast a prop and staff in life's quicksands,

God-given, we know. We thank Him, day by day,
That from the glory round about His throne
He did permit us to enjoy this ray
That has so many years upon us shone, —

A guardian angel for so long a way
That we have come to feel it is our own, —
A blessed helper which no hand can take
Save His alone who did its voice awake.

THE WORD OF THE LORD.

1 Samuel, iii: 1.

"And the Word of the Lord was precious,"
No open vision was seen;
But the people believed and worshiped
With the temple veil between.
And most reverently they listened
To each holy, blessed word
While their children were taught to worship,
To know and to fear the Lord.

Is the Word of the Lord still precious?
His temple a holy place?
'Mid the throngs that each Sabbath gather
Is there never a mocking face?

Do we look in vain for the jewels
And the glare that fashion brings?
Are the spoils that we take from the vanquished,
As of old, forbidden things?

Oh! do we not rather flaunt them
In the temple's most holy place,
Forgetting the better adornments
Becoming a child of grace,—
That a meek and quiet spirit
Is better than gold and gems,
And a faith in our blessed Saviour
The richest of diadems?

May the Lord, with divine compassion,
Forgive us, His children, here,
For the pride and the sinful pleasures
We hold in our hearts so dear.

May we who have hope in His mercy
Depart from our sinful ways,
And His Holy Word be as precious
As it was in the olden days.

RETROSPECTION.

I knew a green and sunny spot of ground
That formed an island in the early spring;
The brook, with one broad sweep, went circling round;
Along its fringe of alders, vines did cling;
'T was there the bluebird and the oriole found
A grand old temple when they wished to sing.
I used to find the earliest violets there;
I scarcely knew a place to me so fair.

I wonder if the maple holds aloft
Its keys innumerable as it did then;
I wonder if the turf is just as soft
To children's feet; if I should know again

The old white thorn, where, wont to go so oft,
I gathered garlands. Is it one, or ten,
Or twice ten years since I stood on the bank
Where ferns and willows grew so thick and rank?

I well remember how I dipped my feet,
So bare and brown, beneath the waters cool;
Or sat enthroned upon some mossy seat,
To play the teacher of a rustic school,
And my imaginary pupils beat
With slender twigs, because they missed a rule,
Or idly dropped a book or pencil down,—
How well I learned to counterfeit a frown!

Come back, O summer! when the days were long;
Take one white garland from the thorn, and bring;
Weave in some violets; let the wild bird's song
With all its wonted harmony out-ring;

And let me bury all the grief and wrong
The years have brought me; for I fain would sing
A joyous lay. I weary of the care
And pain and sin that meet me everywhere.

A VISION.

My eyes were dazzled by no shining throne,
And yet I felt the presence of the King;
I was as if by angel strength upborne,
And yet I saw no wings!

I was not conscious that a white-robed throng
Walked to and fro along the golden street,
And yet I listened to a holy song,
And knew that it was sweet.

Dear ones, long lost from earth's familiar ways,
Came not, as I had thought, to welcome me,
And yet I did not miss them, — in the blaze
Of suns, who stars could see?

I did not see life's river flowing by;
But oh! I felt — and that was better still—
Its waters in my soul, and knew that I
Had had of them my fill,

And should no longer thirst. They seemed to me
Perennial fountains springing up within,
Drowning my sins till they should cease to be,—
Our thirst is born of sin!

The Tree of Life, with wondrous healing powers,
I did not see; and yet upon my tongue
Lingered the taste of luscious fruit and flowers,
Whose perfume to me clung.

I said that I had weary grown of late,
And earth and all its cares I would give o'er;
And begged to stay if only by the gate,
And faint and thirst no more.

And then a cloud did drift before my face,
Its motions making music in the air,
And from my sight the glory did efface
The while it still was there.

I saw the past — where I had knelt to pray,
Without a shelter in the weary land,
Not seeing with dim eyes beside the way
A Saviour's outstretched hand.

So near He was His robe I could have clasped,
And wrapped myself within, and given a kiss
To the dear feet, His mighty arm have grasped.
Alas, what did I miss!

I saw the future! 'Mid its hills so steep
I walked in fancy; and, in heart, I said,
What will it matter though deep call to deep,
And meet above my head,

And burst in fury! Is the time so long
That I shall lose the memory of this home?
I have been weak, but will I not be strong
In the few years to come?

A sweetness, not of earth, did fill my soul,
And waves of harmony did crowd the air;
My dwarfed and blighted life was rounded whole,
For Heaven, indeed, was there!

'Tis but a single link of the great chain
Of God's eternal purposes I see,
And yet, through that, forever more is plain
His goodness unto me.

OUR WAYS.

How broad our ways look ere the tide of years
  Has swept us out beyond the bounds of youth!
How smooth and sunny all the land appears,
  With scarce a hedge save honor, love, and truth.

And they are full of flowers of wond'rous bloom,
  And dainty buds of promise still more rare,
Or thick-strewn leaves that yield a soft perfume,
  Diffusing joy and gladness everywhere.

We feel so strong, we think our wills can sweep
  Whate'er impedes our course aside like straws;
Whatever others do we will not sleep,
  Or spend our precious hours without applause.

'Tis not so much what is, as what will be,
That paints with glory all our youthful dreams;
Our eyes grow wide to what they wish to see,
Our tongues all eloquent on pleasant themes.

We will do that which seemeth good and wise,
For that will satisfy and please us most;
And we will choose a way where Fortune lies,
And buy us greatness at whatever cost.

And we will go as seemeth to us best,—
Sail out beyond the "Orient's purple rim,"
Or wait our fortune in the great broad West;
All ways are light, and nothing dark or dim.

But, as we wander down the vale of years,
First this bright avenue, then that, is lost;
One winding through a maze of doubts and fears,
The other by a chain of mountains crossed.

And long before the half-way point we turn
Our broad highway has narrowed, oh, so much!
And we walk silent, we who hoped to learn
So many lessons we have failed to touch.

Hedged round by circumstances unforeseen,
And hurried on as by some cruel fate,
Contrasting sadly what we "might have been"
With what we are, we murmur, "'Tis too late."

Most happy they, who in their early youth,
With Christian faith, begin aright to live;
And, drinking deeply of eternal truth,
Have little thirst for what the world can give.

THE OCEAN'S SECRET.

O idle boats! as ye lie all day,
Sunning yourselves on the lap of the sea,
Do you hear from the boats that are far away,
Where the winds are fresh and the sails are free?

When a whisper runs from wave to wave
Of one that was sunk, or one that was burned,
Do they speak of his, so strong and brave,
That sailed one day, but never returned?

It was years ago; but it could not be!
If there was a storm, and his boat went down,
And all beside were lost in the sea,—
It could not be our brother did drown.

O wild sea-gulls! do you think he did?
Did you pass the ship on the wings of the storm?
Did the clouds grow thick till the sun was hid,
And the night came down with an awful form?

Did the waves put on their caps of white,
And meet each other in masks of foam,
While the sailors looked at the fearful sight,
And longed in their hearts for the peace of home?

O treacherous waves, ye must have known!
If the ship was lost and all the crew,
The cruelest wind that ever has blown
Was a better friend to him than you.

You cover your victims, dark and deep,
And leave no mark of their hiding place,
Where a friend might come to mourn and weep,
While you went on with a smiling face.

So the salt sea wind will wander by,
And never a word to us will tell;
And the gulls and the petrels onward fly,
And the ocean guards its secret well.

A SUNSET IN SPRING.

"The hills are full of sunset, ma'ma!"
My little daughter said;
The day had been a day of fret,
The smoke of conflict lingered yet
Around my weary head.

But evening promised sweet release,
With time to rest, and dream
Of that fair land whose air is peace,
Our Father's house where discords cease,
And many a pleasant theme.

The Uncanoonucs, blue and bold,
Grew warm and strangely bright;

Above, from north to south, unrolled
A crimson banner, fold on fold,
Its edges seamed with light.

Was it unfurled by angel hand,
A glorious flag of truce?
Want's giant army did disband,
No duty seemed beside to stand;
For once they let us loose.

Monadnock lay in partial shade;
Along its northern crest
A narrow fringe of snow was laid,
In some cool nook or sheltered glade,
Like arctic wave at rest.

Perhaps the sweet arbutus hid
Its pink and pearl along the edge;
The snow above like some cool lid

'Neath which the morning sunbeams slid,
Each golden ray a wedge.

The hills were full of sunset warm,
It crowned them with its glow;
Like some sweet presence that can charm,
That brings us peace and shields from harm,
It blessed the vales below.

The hills of life, though sometimes bare,
Are crowned with sunlight too;
Beyond the tears, beyond the care,
The land of promise rises fair,
Scarce hidden from our view.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

He dwells among us, — 't is our pride and boast, —
Among us but not of us, for his pen
Was long since kissed by altar fires, and lost
That grossness which doth weigh down other men.

It helped to loose the fetters from dark hands
That had been cramped with them for many a year,
Touching with mighty force the iron bands, —
All potent with that love that knows no fear.

By suffering taught, with suffering purified,
Till his great gift upon the altar lay,
Where nothing could its matchless beauty hide,
Or dim the brightness of its heavenly ray.

We read his songs, and in our hearts springs up
A strength of purpose we had never known,
And patiently we take life's bitter cup,
No longer feeling that we stand alone.

Their hidden beauty comes to us sometimes
Like sudden flashes from a cloud at eve;
A sweet perfume swept out of holier climes,
A golden thread within the web we weave.

Some of them come before us like a view
Of sky and sea made pure with morning air;
Others have hidden stores of old and new;
A few have shown us the white wings of prayer.

The world has need of such. A breath of song
May wake a soul that through the tempest slept,
Or stay a shining, subtle wave of wrong
That through the avenues of life had crept.

God needs them. They who turn from Him aside —
Blinded by sin — by such are led to see
That beauty and that truth which will abide
When time is lost within eternity.

And we who wonder o'er the pleasant strains,
And lose ourselves in the melodious waves,
Need them to charm away the stinging pains
That vex us from our cradles to our graves.

Our teacher and our lesson may be one
With his whose matchless eloquence we sing;
But we the prelude scarcely have begun,
While all its wonders through his pulses ring.

"Born in the purple," and on manna fed
Till all its sweetness lingered on his tongue,
Cradled in virtue and by wisdom led,
His real worth has never yet been sung.

GOD IS LOVE.

Sing, the morning light is breaking,
And the shadows fly;
Earth, in all its beauty waking,
Praises God most high.
Sing, the zephyrs soft are o'er us,
Fleecy clouds above,
While the birds in joyful chorus
Tell us God is love.

Now the noon is bright and glowing,
Rest would be so sweet,
When the brook is softly flowing,
And the shadows meet.
Summer's light and life are o'er us,
Summer skies above,

All the world is bright before us,
Knowing God is love.

Weary feet are homeward turning,
Lower sinks the sun;
Sunset clouds in splendor burning
Tell us day is done.
Pray, the shadows deepen o'er us,
Darker all above,
But the stars in solemn chorus
Whisper God is love.

TRIAL DAYS.

"Staff won't beat kid, and kid won't go." — *Nursery Rhyme.*

We remember once, when our years were less,
The help of a friend in a time of need;
We often sigh for her warm caress,
Or smile at some well remembered deed,
Some word of hers that was wise or quaint,
That came to our aid in a weary hour,
That brought a smile, or hushed a complaint,
As it fell from her lips with a loving power.

We remember a day — was it fall or spring? —
When all the morning she wrought with a will,
But nothing perfect to pass could bring;
The spirit of discord triumphed still.

I do not know if 't were wind or tide
Disturbed our lives in their peaceful flow,
But she said to me as she smiled, and sighed,
"It is one of the days when 'kid won't go.'"

And many and many a day since then,
When the world seemed naught but a cloud of dust,
When the good of life was beyond our ken,
And we labored only because we must,
When the burdens of life did worry and fret,
And we wondered why we were troubled so,
We have thought of her words when with cares beset,
"It is one of the days when 'kid won't go.'"

It was only a bit of a nursery rhyme
We had learned when young at our mother's knee;
But it sounded quaint in that weary time,
And it came like a helping hand to me.

There are tears for us all, and trials and strife,
As we sojourn here in this world below;
In the brightest age, and the smoothest life,
There is often a day when "kid won't go."

A CLOUD VIEW FROM MOUNT WASHINGTON.

O cloud unsearchable! O height sublime!
Thought crowds on thought like a harmonious rhyme.
This lighter air dispels our earthly dreams,
For earth is lost, and Heaven so near it seems
  As if one throb of the aspiring heart,
    One sweet, ecstatic throb, might land us there,
    Or launch us out upon this sea of air,—
  This shoreless, trackless sea,—God's realm of art.
Ah, how we pant, and strive to lift ourselves
  Above ourselves, and nearer to His throne!
  Infinity and mystery clasp their own,
And leave no room for doubts,—those cold, blue elves.
  Lost in a maze of new-found thoughts we stand,
  Like half-fledged sea-birds on a breezy strand.

THE SOUL'S PALACE.

Build, O soul! a palace fair,
Not a castle in the air.
Cloud-wrought palaces are gay
On a balmy morn in May,
But the lightest wind that blows
Parts the curtains, white and rose.
Should a storm in fury fall,
What is left of tower or walls?
Though the structure, fair and white,
Pleased the taste and charmed the sight;
Though its windows red should blush
With the sunset's rosy flush;
Though its halls were vast and grand,
Built as by a Master's hand;

Though its dome should tower on high,
Outlined perfect on the sky,—
Every breath would sound its knell,
Every touch its ruin tell!
Take the firm foundation stone,
"Rock of Ages,"—that alone;
All the rest are weak and worn.
Build the walls of noble deeds,—
Not of vain and useless creeds
Born of earth and emptiness,
Clad with haste in borrowed dress.
Build it spacious, build it high;
Hope, the tower, should pierce the sky.
Build it spacious; room to grow
Is as much as seed to sow.
Want of light will make men blind,
Want of space a narrow mind;
Let the windows open wide

To the light on every side;
Pure without and pure within,
No dark nooks for hidden sin.
Now with golden grace inwrought,
Hung with many a glorious thought;
Cushion with the conscience, ease,
Curtain with the wings of peace.
Love to God and love to men,
Such as thou wouldst have again,
Shall thy strongest pillars be,
Truth alone the golden key.

Soul, O build thy palace strong!
Every day thy task prolong.
Fire and flood your work will try,
Storms will gather, winds will sigh,
Grievous hail will beat and mar,
Simoons coming from afar

Round its walls in might will sweep;
Deep shall call aloud to deep.
Build as one that builds for time,
With a purpose all sublime;
Build as one whose wealth shall be
Garnered in eternity.

OUR GUEST.

Who comes at this late hour, with fairy hands,
And knocks so boldly at the inner door?
With sunny brow and smiling eyes she stands,
And all the way of life is flooded o'er
With summer beauty; while the heavy bands
Of care and pain grow lighter than before.
Welcome, thrice welcome, unexpected guest!
Our Father's time of blessing is the best

When life was fresher, and held fewer fears,
Before its current was so swift and cold,
Ere yet we felt the burden of those years
That brought the losses in the dear home fold,
The eyes that welcome were less dim with tears,

The hands that clasp, more confident and bold:
But, if at two-score we have graver ways,
Perhaps the wisdom gained the loss repays.

At least we'll hope so. May it serve to make
Your path, if not more bright, at least less rough.
As one by one your slumbering wants awake
May food to satisfy be found, enough
To strengthen you though all the world forsake,
Or Fortune with her many arts rebuff.
Wisdom grows slowly; 't is a plant of years,
Whose bud of promise sometimes disappears.

Life has bright days, glad days, when all we love
Come crowding round us with their words of cheer;
When hope, triumphant, gilds the skies above,
And foes that long have haunted disappear;

'Tis when we feel the power that we prove,
'Tis when Success on board our bark doth steer;
But when we toil all night and nothing take,
All but a few, the faithful few, forsake.

The ship that comes full-freighted to the shore
Will never lack for hands to help unload;
Whoever gives from an abundant store,
And scatters treasure all along the road,
Will never knock in vain at any door,
Or lack for reapers of the blessings strewed.
But, if we break the threads by Fortune spun,
We must give place to some more prosperous one.

We know there is a face behind the cloud,
We know there is a hand upon the deep;
A voice comes to us in the thunder loud,
And in the still, deep hush when shadows creep;

And all the way from swathing band to shroud
We feel His presence. May He guide and keep
Our little one. We welcome then our guest, —
Our Father's time of blessing is the best.

BEFORE THE STORM.

How still the morn! The mountains rise
  Like great blue domes across the west;
The air is chill, for snowy sighs
  Come floating from their northern nest,—
That great white nest around the pole,
  Where sea-birds brood, and far, and free,
Strange isles the cold waves rock and roll,
  Pale children of the air and sea.

The trees are leafless. Round and round
  The snow-birds circle, lighting down
Where their quick eyes upon the ground
  Spy tiny grass heads, ripe and brown.

The sky is dim, as if the host
That gathered for the coming fray,
Their wonted colors dimmed or lost,
Had donned, instead, the army gray.

Portentous silence! Now the air
Is all alive with tiny things,
Down floating, softly; pure and fair,
Like pearly dust from angel wings,
Come faster, faster, till the wood
That crowns the top of yonder hill
Is clothed in ermine, fair and good, —
A kingly robe! come faster still.

Blow, north wind! take your trumpet down,
And wake the spirit of the trees
That slept while all their leaves grew brown,
And floated downward on the breeze.

Blow, north wind! fast the snow-flakes fall,
Thou shouldst be herald of the host;
From out the icy caverns call!
The earth has won what heaven has lost.

TO THE PLANET JUPITER.

Well named of old! Thou shin'st a god,
In that far realm, so coldly blue;
Thine orbit, wide as thought, untrod
By other starry worlds in view.

Thou hast a message, and it comes
With more or less of silent force;
Some eyes are blind, some lips are dumb,
Some lives are scant through all their course.

To one, thou art a point of light,
A single solitary ray,
To blend with more and bless the night,
And cheer the traveler on his way.

Another sees a shining world
Teeming with life in myriad forms,
Born of God's thought, and seeming hurled
Through airy paths, unrent by storms.

Distinct from all the stars that float
In the dim sea of circling blue;
Seen through far spaces, vast, remote, —
So wonderful! both old and new.

Old in a way we understand, —
Shining on Pharoah and his host,
Beaming serene o'er all the land,
In that dark age when Truth seemed lost.

New in the sense of one unknown. —
Beyond our reach, divinely stored,
Full of great wonders, all thine own,
Which are, and must be, unexplored.

This world is but a speck to thee,
A tiny glow-worm in the sun;
And yet 'tis more than we can see,
Or comprehend, when all is done.

So broad, the wisest can but scan
Some little corner half in doubt;
So intricate, man loses man,
And only God can search him out;

Yet, kept by His almighty power
Within its orbit, dim and vast,
Like thee, one more of that great shower
His opulence has round him cast.

Who knows but that they all revolve
Like sentinels around His throne?
Who can the mystic riddle solve
Save He who calls them all His own?

Yet we aspire to dwell with Him —
Oh wondrous love that crowned us so!
Down sent through ages dark and dim,
The only light we have below.

A REGRET.

I wish he could have known of this one gift,—
  It would have seemed a gift in partial eyes,—
He would have been so glad! I see the swift,
  The keen, bright look, and gesture of surprise;
I well remember how the clouds would lift
  From off his brow, sometimes, when I, grown wise,
Did seek his thoughts from present grief to turn.
How soon the mother's ways the children learn!

He was so hopeful of me when there seemed
  So little to encourage; saw so much
In all my childish preferences he deemed
  In future years would ripen into such,

And such sweet fruit, as he the more esteemed
Because it had been held beyond his touch.
He must have seen along the track of years
Some buds of hope that did allay his fears.

He loved me so. I see it now when there
Is nothing left to me save memories dear,
And one thick, glossy lock of dark brown hair,—
I seldom see it save through falling tears,—
And a few worn mementos, never fair,
But kept, so sacredly, through changing years
Because they once were his. If I had known
Of his deep love, and more of mine had shown!

It would be such a comfort could I show
Some little kindness in return for all
The love and tenderness which now I know
Was in his heart for me. I can recall

His very words and looks, when here below,
His smiles that did so often on me fall.
Ah me! so many years the grass has grown
Between us, now he might not know his own.

I think there must have been within our hearts,
If mine was but a child's, something akin;
I feel it sometimes, when my hot blood starts,
Or some wild impulse seizes me within;
Or when I choose, unthinkingly, a part
Of some strange mazy doubt to wander in,
Wooing its mystery. They little err
Who think his fancies still my pulses stir.

I would not disappoint him. Were he still,
As oft of old, to raise my standard higher,
I would not let one hope die out, or fill
My eyes with tears; but I would so aspire,

I would so struggle, that my wavering will
Should be established, and the altar fire
Should glow with sacrifices laid thereon, —
His aspirations I would make my own.

I sometimes wonder if the thoughts that come
With sudden, startling force may not be his.
Is the partition wall between his home
And mine so thick we may not have the bliss
To make each other hear? I would that some
Of the most happy thoughts I catch and miss
Might be both his and mine, and come and go
Between, and bless us both, — could it be so.

A WISH.

Now which will you have? A story
That has many times been told,
Or a little "pet of a sonnet"
That is neither new nor old?

Or a friendly wish half-hidden
In a mist of tender words,
As warm as the breath of summer,
And sweet as the song of birds?

I tell my stories so idly,
You would never care to hear;
My sonnets are full of fancies
That are neither bright nor clear.

But a wish for you will broaden
Till under its shining wings
I gather the wealth of the Indies,
And a score of better things.

Whatever can soothe you, weary,
Or lighten your load of care,
Or brighten a way grown dreary,
Will never be wanting there.

There's a peace that brings new beauty
To all who may have or hold,
And a consciousness of merit
That is better than rank or gold.

There's a way that always brightens
And broadens with every year,
There is fame that is worth the having,
That comes of a record clear.

There's a fair, good name, unspotted, —
The hardest of all to win, —
That even the angels might covet
If gained in this world of sin.

All this, and much that is nameless,
I fold in this wish of mine; —
Could I but give as it pleased me,
My friend, they should all be thine.

TOO LATE.

"Write me a poem," said a care-worn friend,
"Something of yours to keep." And so I did.
It was a pleasant task from end to end,
For once, at least, to do as I was bid;
I waited, though, until there came a time
When all my thoughts seemed flowing into rhyme.

I know my heart grew warmer as I wrote,
Strange fancies came in such a wondrous way,
And in etherial beauty seemed to float;
While some went by, and some were bid to stay;
And one by one I put them into place,
And thought them full of beauty and of grace.

So it was finished, and I laid it by;
(I did not see my friend as days went on.)
Sometimes I read it with a smile or sigh,
And ere I knew it half a year was gone;
And still I waited, for I would not send,
But rather chose to give it to my friend.

'Tis still beside me, for his hand was cold
When next I saw him, and his face was white;
The flowers around him, and the weeping, told
That he would soon be carried from our sight.
I almost felt as if I had done wrong;
My friendly missive had been kept too long.

It might, perhaps, have brought a sunny smile
Into his pale but always patient face;
He once did praise my simple songs and style,
And praise from him was more than common praise.

He used it sparingly, and I had grown
To think the more of every word and tone.

We keep our pleasant wishes and sweet words
So long, sometimes, they are of little use.
We might have spoken and been gladly heard,
We might have let our deeper feelings loose;
We kept them back until the time went by,
And then regretted as we wondered why.

COMMON THINGS.

They lie around on every side,
For every day some blessing brings;
We look upon them without pride,
For what are they but common things?
So common that we have not known
The loss that we should feel to-day,
If they were gathered one by one
And hidden from our sight away.

So common that we use or waste
As if they were our very own;
We sweeten this or that to taste,
And revel in our joy's full blown,

We lay them down, or take them up,
No thankful thought about them clings;
We do not care to fill our cup,
Life's golden cup, with common things.

We want some rare and precious pet
That common people cannot buy;
We want the best that we can get,
No matter if the price is high.
Our birds are all too common-place, —
Bring us some foreign one that sings,
With beauty that our halls would grace;
We've had enough of common things.

We want the best the world affords;
Pray who should have it if not we?
We want the gold the miser hoards,
We want the pearls that gem the sea.

The world moves slow, we long to fly;
How many of us sigh for wings!
Yet we should pass them coldly by,
Were they once classed with common things.

Whatever things are rich or grand,
Whatever others most desire,
We fain would hold with eager hand;
It is to these our souls aspire.
The brightest stars should light our way,
The choicest favors Fortune brings;
Let us remember, when we pray,
How many lack for common things.

UNHONORED.

JOHN vii: 5.

Strange things were done! the lame did walk upright;
The deaf rejoiced as His loved voice they heard;
Lepers were cleansed, the blind received their sight;
Slow moving pulses with new life were stirred.

The air was thick with rumors, and they came —
The sick and suffering — from each hill and vale,
And thronged about Him, whispering His name,
Or list'ning eagerly to some strange tale

Of wond'rous cure wrought by His healing hand,
While Death relented at His gracious call,
And stormy passions hastened to disband,
And demons, shorn of strength, before Him fall.

Of His great mission giving proof on proof,
Letting the light of truth shine broadly out;
And still His brethren silent stood, aloof,
Coldly observed, and shook their heads in doubt.

Still, as of yore, "'tis distance lends a charm;"
A picture brought us from some foreign land
Has fairer outlines, and a tint more warm,
Than any painted by a well-known hand.

From lips of song we hear and hear in vain,—
Words of strange melody seem empty sound,
Until from other shores the sweet refrain
Comes back to us with fame and honor crowned.

BEREAVED.

How many mothers sit by little graves,
And hide their aching hearts from passers by;
While days drift on like overlapping waves;
They sit, and wonder why.

They miss the dimpled cheeks and dewy eyes,
The waxen fingers, clinging like a kiss,
The long sweet looks of infantine surprise,
The care that held such bliss.

There is no longer any need of haste,
The mother's morning task is lighter now;
The restless moments come, and run to waste,
No matter when or how.

The same, yet not the same. The tiny shoe
Fitted a tiny foot, now cold as stone;
This little snowy robe is fresh and new, —
It was our darling's own.

This empty cradle — empty? Nay, 'tis not!
'Tis full of promise-buds that once were sweet,
Blighted at birth, as if a simoon hot
Had laid them at our feet.

"For ever safe" — but oh, what depth of skies,
What hills of doubt lie high and cold between!
What somber darkness in the valley lies!
What chasms intervene!

"For ever safe" — God gathers them straightway,
Not one is left to roam outside the fold;
Immortal spirits never sin, or stray
In hunger or in cold.

And yet — and yet — O mothers, sad and lone,
This is cold comfort both to you and me;
Between us and the Heaven where they have gone
Lies Death's dark mystery.

HELP ME.

"Make haste to help me." — PSALM 70: 1.

Help me when the way is clear
And the days are longest;
Help me when reward is near
And the sunlight strongest.

Help me in the day of strife,
When life's combats thicken;
Help me when the flowers of life
Satisfy and sicken.

Help me when the joys I prove,
Aspirations smother;
Help me when the friend I love
Leaves me for another.

Help me when the gifts I hold
All my pulses weaken;
Help me if I leave the fold,
Be my guide and beacon.

Help me when the way is dark,
And the storms appalling;
Help me when I lose the mark,
'Mid the shadows falling.

Help me as thou didst of old
Every truthful seeker;
Help me, Father, when my hold
Of this life grows weaker.

Help me when the hand of death
Slackens each endeavor;
Lord, receive my latest breath,
Give me rest for ever.

TO LAKE MASSABESIC.

We claim thee, Massabesic, for our own!
We care not who may look upon thee more,
Or cull the lilies o'er thy waters strewn,
Or fashion boats to glide thy surface o'er,
Or claim thy wooded banks, where hoarse winds moan
And wander at their will from shore to shore;
We have a stronger claim, if not so clear,—
If love were sign, how soon it would appear!

We never speak of thee except to praise;
Thou hast no faults in our too partial eyes.
We love thy peaceful isles, thy flower-decked bays;
We sometimes fancy that our future lies

Linked in with thine in many unseen ways;
Our hopes and fears like thy blue waves arise
When flaws of Fortune's wind do strike our sails,
Sometimes we fear a calm, sometimes a gale.

Our love began to burn — when? Ask the child,
Sitting all day beside the mother's knee,
List'ning to her loved voice, so sweet and mild,
When it first felt the love now flowing free
For that fond parent! If thy voice is wild
When rough winds blow, 'tis musical to me;
If thou dost frown, we think thee charming still;
'Tis but the wind, and not thine own sweet will.

Long years ago, the Red Men trod thy shores,
And launched the bark canoe upon thy waves,
Thy pleasant sunny isles they wandered o'er;
When called to "happy hunting grounds," their
graves

Were found beside thee; but they come no more,
And not a trace is left of them now save
Some rudely fashioned arrow-heads of stone,
Or points of spear that must have been their own.

One legacy they left thee, — was it chance? —
A quaintly sounding name, most dear to me,
That seems to whisper of some old romance,
Some pleasant tale blown over from far seas.
We fancy, too, that it may help, perchance,
To make thee noted in the years to be;
It rings with music like the winds at play,
And shall be thine for ever and for aye!

Thou dost not disappoint: the same to-day
As when a child we stood upon thy shore,
Watching thy endless waves in endless play,
And musing, as they gathered o'er and o'er,

And swept the rocky beach, and rolled away,
Of life's great sea, and all the ships it bore,
Which rode triumphant o'er a stormless main,
Freighted with all we had, or hoped to gain.

We stood beside thee when our hearts were young,
And all our way seemed rounded like thy shore;
Thy dancing waves of hope and pleasure sung,
And duties lighter than the foam they bore,
And strong desires, that round about us clung,
And every day a fairer mantle wore.
Still, waiting years whose freshness charmed us then,
But which we scarce should care to live again.

Again, in later years, when sorrow stood
Like a grim sentinel beside our door,
When all the past seemed full of vanished good,
And all the present looked so scant and poor,

Thou wert the same as when in gayer mood
Our feet had trodden thy beloved shores.
Time carried far the sorrow on his wings,
But even yet we feel its bitter stings.

Two broad blue bays that stretch out east and west,
Dotted with fairy isles of living green,
And midway, where the waters seem to rest
In narrow bed, two curving shores between,
A time-worn bridge that long has stood the test
Of stormy winds and restless tides, are seen;—
"A thing of beauty," as e'en strangers see,
But thou art more than that, fair lake, to me.

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